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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001928

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/01/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZO1: WEEKEND DEMONSTRATIONS MOSTLY PEACEFUL;
JORDANIANS OUTSIDE AMMAN UNITED AGAINST THE WAR

REF: A. AMMAN 1867

[B](#). AMMAN 1872

[C](#). AMMAN 1875

[D](#). AMMAN 1883

[E](#). AMMAN 1905

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm. Reasons 1.5(B) and (D)

Jordanians express their anti war rage

[1](#)1. (C) Weekend demonstrations in Jordan's refugee camps, Amman, Irbid, Salt, Zarqa, Karak, Aqaba and Maan attracted large numbers of anti war Jordanians. Many demonstrators carried pictures of Saddam Hussein, a phenomenon that has been much less common in marches up to now, and chant "death to America," hailing the Iraqi leader and the people of Iraq for fighting the "US aggression". While most demonstrations were peaceful, the press reports that police in Maan, a city with a history of confrontations, used tear gas when protesters hurled stones at them. In Amman, some protesters called on Saddam to use chemical weapons against British and US troops.

[1](#)2. (C) In downtown Amman, approximately 3,000 demonstrators marched following noon prayers on March 28, a lower turnout than a week ago. Though largely peaceful, reports of vandalism to a bus and some arrests took place. Maan reported another 400-500 rock throwing protesters. On March 29, Public Security Directorate (PSD) sources reported that approximately 7-10,000 anti-war protesters participated in demonstrations in Irbid, with another 10,000 participants near Marka airport in Amman and smaller peaceful demonstrations in Wihdat and Baq'aa refugee camps. On March 31, smaller, non-violent candlelight vigils were reported, a hundred press members marched peacefully and about 700 participants demonstrated at the Professional Associations Complex, never leaving the complex grounds. More licensed demonstrations are planned throughout the week.

Reactions to war outside Amman

[1](#)3. (C) A survey of Embassy contacts outside Amman reflects the population's growing loss of trust in their government and its declarations. In Salt, (a medium sized city 30 minutes from Amman) former parliamentarian Salameh Hiyari says the whole country is boiling and Jordanians are angry at their government. He worries the situation may get worse. Many of our contacts throughout the country worry about the huge disconnect they see between the King's public and private position on the war, and the intense opposition to the war of most Jordanians. This gap, they argue, affects the King and government's credibility with the populace. Hiyari cites the ever growing number of Jordanians attending Friday prayers and praying for God to support Iraq and destroy the US.

[1](#)4. (C) In Ramtha, the home of the four Jordanian students killed in Iraq last week, former parliamentarian Fawwaz Zu'bi says the mood is just as tense and calls the situation "dangerous". He says the people are very angry and wonders how far that anger will go once the battle for Baghdad takes place and greater numbers of Iraqi civilian deaths are shown on Arab television.

[1](#)5. (C) Mohammad Al-Kouz, former parliamentarian who represented the Wihdat refugee camp, says there is "complete solidarity" with Saddam and the Iraqi people. The demonstrators at a rally in Wihdat Camp on March 28 numbered in the low thousands. He said the sole beneficiary of the current situation is the Muslim Brotherhood.

Comment

[1](#)6. (C) Numerous contacts have expressed to us their worry that the war in Iraq is making many Jordanians turn to religion. Our Western-oriented contacts in particular fear that the war will boost the political fortunes of the Islamic Action Front and other, more radical, groups.

GNEHM